SFChronicle AUG 11 1978

Jesse Jackson Doubts Ray Killed Dr. King

Petros, Tenn.

Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, who was with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he was shot to death ten years ago in Memphis, met behind bars with James Earl Ray yesterday and later said he has "profound doubt" the convicted assassin actually killed King.

"I am convinced that he was involved but was not alone," Jackson said. "It may very well be that Mr. Ray was a diversion in a grander scheme."

In another development in the Ray case, Dr. Ralph Abernathy, another civil rights leader who was with King on the day of the assassination, told the Memphis Commercial-Appeal that he will testify at a congressional hearing next week that he believes the FBI and Memphis police helped "conspirators" spirit Ray from Memphis after the assassination April 4, 1968.

"If given a new trial, he (Ray) would reveal the names and information that would lead the police to the real killers of Martin Luther King," Abernathy said.

Ray, serving a 99-year term at Brushy Mountain State Prison for the King slaying, initially pleaded guilty to the crime, but has since changed his story and contends he was not the triggerman.

He has asked Jackson and Abernathy, who succeeded King as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to help him win a new trial.

"Because we are convinced that a trial would be in the national interest, we called the Justice Department from the penitentiary and I talked to Benjamin Civiletti, and we will try to meet with Mr. Bell (Attorney General Griffin Bell) to challenge the Justice Department's position (on the case)," Jackson said.

"We asked him (Ray) point blank if he killed Dr. King," Jackson related. "He said he did not kill King and he said if he had to argue the case it would be in these areas:"

- That he had a low motivation to kill King.
- That he was at a service station and not at the flop house (where the shot that killed King was fired).
- That his (Ray's) background in crime was not in violent crime.
- That the bullet taken from King's body was never proved to have come from the rifle on which police said they found Ray's fingerprints.
- That the dumping of his belongings near the scene of the crime was an unreasonable way to escape.

United Press